

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8659

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MADRID 458

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ:
III. INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION

1. DURING LUNCH AT HIS INVITATION JANUARY 18 WITH PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ, (OTHER TOPICS BY SEPTELS) WE HAD A LONG AND INTERESTING EXCHANGE ON THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION. I TOLD HIM THAT THE USG CONTINUED TO FOLLOW WITH SYMPATHY, ATTENTION AND SUPPORTIVE UNDERSTANDING SPAIN'S EVOLUTION TOWARDS DEMOCRACY. I CONGRATULATED HIM FOR THE MANNER IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN DIRECTING THE PROCESS.

2. I TOLD SUAREZ THAT I NOTED WITH SOME CONCERN THAT WHILE THERE SEEMED TO BE CONHESION ON THE RIGHT (ALIANZA POPULAR) AND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT ON THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT (PSOE), SUCH COHESION APPEARED TO BE LACKING IN THE CENTER. THERE WAS A GREAT DISPERSION OF POLITICAL GROUPS WITHIN THE CENTER AND I WONDERED WHETHER THIS CONFUSION MIGHT BE PREJUDICIAL TO HIS REFORM PROGRAM, SINCE IT MIGHT GIVE ADVANTAGE TO THOSE ON THE RIGHT WHO ARE SOMEWHAT LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT REFORM.

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3. SUAREZ COMMENTED THAT HE WAS IN VERY CLOSE AND DIRECT TOUCH WITH MOST OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS NOW ACTIVE (EXCEPT THE COMMUNISTS) AND THAT IT WAS HIS AIM IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO BRING ALL THESE POLITICAL GROUPS AROUND THE TABLE TO TRY TO WORK OUT THE BROAD LINES OF SPAIN'S FUTURE POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND ON FOREIGN POLICY. HE INTENDED TO REMAIN IN FULL CHARGE OF THE

PROCESS BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT WAS NECESSARY TO BUILD UP A CONSENSUS ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE FUTURE. ACCORDING TO SUAREZ, THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE ESSENTIALLY BROKEN DOWN INTO THREE BROAD CATEGORIES. THERE ARE THOSE SUCH AS ALIANZA POPULAR AND THE UDE (OSORIO AND MONREAL LUQUE) WHICH ARE COMPLETELY LEGALIZED AND WILL RECEIVE ALL THE BENEFITS FLOWING FROM SUCH AN ACT. THE SECOND GROUP CONSISTS OF THOSE PARTIES, FOR EXAMPLE THE PSOE, WHICH ARE IN AN ILLEGAL THOUGH NOT ILLICIT STATUS. THEY MUST COMPLETE SOME KIND OF ACTION TO REGULARIZE THEIR STATUS BEFORE THEY CAN HAVE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT-ACCORDED BENEFITS. AND FINALLY, THERE IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY ABOUT WHICH THERE IS A PRESUMPTION OF ILLICIT ASSOCIATION WHICH CAN ONLY BE RESOLVED BY THE COURTS.

4. SUAREZ SAID THAT HE AGREED THAT THERE MUST BE COHERSION WITHIN THE CENTER BUT IT MUST BE ONE WHICH REFLECTS THE GENERATIONAL CHANGE WHICH THIS GOVERNMENT HAS SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING ABOUT. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1936, GOVERNMENT LEADERS IDENTIFY WITH THE BAST MAJORITY (70 PERCENT) OF THE COUNTRY WHICH IS UNDER FORTY YEARS OF AGE. EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE PERSONALLY BY HIM TO ENCOURAGE THE FORMATION OF A CENTER COALITION WHICH WILL BE COMPOSED OF THE PARTIDO POPULAR (PIO CABANILLAS), LIBERAL GROUPS HEADED BY GARRIGUES WALKER AND CAMUNAS, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS OF FERNANDEZ ORDONEZ, AND THE UDE AND POSSIBLY OTHERS, THIS COALITION WILL STRONGLY SUPPORT THE TYPE OF SPAIN WHICH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT DESIRES TO CREATE. SUAREZ MADE CONFIDENTIAL

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CLEAR THAT ALTHOUGH HE WOULD NOT PLAY AN ACTIVE POLITICAL ROLE IN THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS, THE KING WANTED HIM TO STAY ON AS PRIME MINISTER. HE HIMSELF WANTED TO STAY ON AND MOST POLITICAL GROUPS APPEARED TO SUPPORT THIS IDEA. THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS MUST BE REGARDED AS PART OF THE TRANSITION PROCESS SINCE THE NEW CORTES' PRIME TASK WILL BE TO CONTINUE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM. CONSEQUENTLY HE DID NOT BELIEVE IT DESIRABLE FOR HIM OR THE GOVERNMENT TO APPEAR TO BE PLAYING PARTISAN POLITICS. AT THE SAME TIME THE CENTER FORMATION WHICH THE KING AND HE WERE ENCOURAGING BEHIND THE SCENES WILL PROVIDE THE MAIN SUPPORT IN THE CONSTITUENT CORTES. IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT AFTER SEVERAL YEARS THE CONSTITUENT PHASE WOULD BE OVER THE NEW ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD. AT THAT TIME HE COULD PLAN TO PLAY AN ACTIVE PARTISAN ROLE SINCE THE PRIME MINISTER IN THE NEWLY ELECTED PARLIAMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE THE EXPRESSION OF A SPECIFIC MAJORITY.

5. I THEN ASKED SUAREZ WHAT ROLE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC GROUPS WOULD PLAY. HE REPLIED THAT THIS AGAIN REFLECTED THE GENERATIONAL PROBLEM. THE LEADERS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC GROUPS (RUIZ GIMENEZ AND GIL ROBLES) ARE OLDER MEN WHO ARE FINDING IT VERY DIFFICULT TO CREATE FOR THEMSELVES AN ADEQUATE IDENTIFICATION WITH THE YOUNGER GENERATION. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WOULD ONLY PLAY A MEANINGFUL ROLE TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL IN FINDING NEW AND YOUNGER LEADERSHIP.

6. TURNING TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY, SUAREZ CONFIRMED HIS FREQUENT CONTACTS WITH FELIPE GONZALEZ, THE PSOE SECRETARY GENERAL, AND COMMENTED HE HAD SEEN HIM JAN. 17

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MADRID 458

EXDIS

(MUCH TO HIS SURPRISE GONZALEZ WAS WEARING A TIE). HE PERSONALLY LIKED HIM AND BELIEVED THAT HIS YOUTH AS WELL AS THAT OF THE PSOE LEADERSHIP IN GENERAL HAD GIVEN IT A STANDING BEYOND ITS SIZE IN THE COUNTRY. SUAREZ TOLD ME THAT HE BELIEVED THERE SHOULD BE A DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY IN SPAIN AND THAT HE HAD REALIZED FROM THE BEGINNING THE PROBLEMS WHICH EXISTED FOR THE PSOE THROUGH THE CONTINUANCE IN CLANDESTINE ILLEGALITY OF THE SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCE). HE HAD CONSCIOUSLY AND DELIBERATELY TRIED TO PRODUCE A NEW SITUATION WHICH WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF RELIEVING THE PSOE FROM THIS WEIGHT. THIS NEW SITUATION NOW EXISTED. HOWEVER, HE WANTED ME TO KNOW THAT HE WAS CONCERNED BY THE CONTINUING MARXIST AND RADICAL VIEWS OF THE PSOE. HE HAD PARTICULARLY TAKEN GONZALEZ TO TASK FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED THE LAST DAY OF THE PSOE CONGRESS WHEN SANTIAGO CARRILLO'S LETTER HAD BEEN READ AND THERE HAD BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC SHOUTS

FROM THE FLOOR CALLING FOR "UNITY". THIS SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT THERE WAS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN GONZALEZ'S MODERATE REPORT TO THE CONGRESS AND THE SENTIMENTS OF THE BASE. SUAREZ SAID HE HAD RECENTLY NOTED A CHANGE IN GONZALEZ. WITHIN THE PAST TEN DAYS, AND THUS PARTICULARLY SINCE FRG CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT HAD BEEN IN MADRID, GONZALEZ HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SURPRISING FREQUENCY WITH HIM (SUAREZ) IN AN EFFORT TO CONVINCE
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HIM OF THE MODERATE DIRECTION OF THE PSOE. SUAREZ SAID HE COULD NOT YET DETERMINE WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN A REAL CHANGE IN THE ATTITUDES OF THE PSOE OR WHETHER GONZALEZ'S PRESENT POSITION WAS ONLY TACTICAL. THERE WERE TOO MANY SIGNS OF UNBALANCE IN THE PSOE POSITION AND THE PRIME MINISTER WAS NOT SURE WHETHER EVEN IF GONZALEZ WISHED TO FOLLOW A MORE BALANCED POSITION, HE COULD CARRY THE PARTY WITH HIM. I TOLD SUAREZ THAT I TOO HAD BEEN TROUBLED BY A LACK OF BALANCE IN THE PSOE, ESPECIALLY ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, AND THAT I HAD RECENTLY TAKEN GONZALEZ TO TASK FOR HAVING BEEN CRITICAL OF PRESIDENT FORD'S STATEMENTS WITH RESPECT TO PUERTO RICO WHILE REMAINING SILENT ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE IN EASTERN EUROPE, EG, THE ARRESTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA OF THOSE DEMANDING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LEDGER, HOWEVER, I WONDERED WHETHER GONZALEZ COULD BE CONSIDERED A REAL MARXIST. SUAREZ SAID HE ALSO DOUBTED THIS BUT THIS DID NOT LESSEN HIS CONCERNS ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF THE PSOE.

7. SUAREZ THEN TURNED TO THE PROBLEM OF THE PCE. HE SAID THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO ELIMINATE, PROBABLY THROUGH DECREE LAW, THE EXISTING LEGAL PROVISION WHEREBY THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO TAKE POSITIVE ACTION TO APPROVE THE REGISTRATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES (THE VENTANILLA). ALL THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED UNDER THE NEW PROVISION WOULD BE FOR PARTIES TO SUBMIT THEIR REGISTRATIONS, LEAVING IT UP TO THE COURTS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THERE WAS ANY JURIDICAL REASON TO INVALIDATE A REGISTRATION. HE HAD SOUGHT AND THOUGHT HE HAD OBTAINED AGREEMENT FROM ALL POLITICAL PARTIES (THOUGH I AM NOT SURE THIS INCLUDES THE PCE) AND FROM THE SPANISH MILITARY THAT THEY WOULD ACCEPT WHATEVER MIGHT BE DECIDED BY THE COURTS ABOUT THE PCE. HE EXPLAINED THAT WITH RESPECT TO POSSIBLE PCE REGISTRATION IT WOULD BE ASSUMED THAT THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES, KNOWING OF THE CASE NOW PENDING
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AGAINST SANTIAGO CARRILLO AND OTHER COMMUNIST LEADERS FOR ILLICIT ASSOCIATION, WOULD HAVE TO GIVE JURIDICAL CONSIDERATION AS TO WHETHER THE STATUS OF THE PCE WAS IN CONSONANCE WITH EXISTING PROVISIONS OF THE PENAL CODE. SUAREZ CLEARLY INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD VIEW IT AS MORE CONVENIENT IF THE COURTS FOUND PCE REGISTRATION ACCEPTABLE. SUAREZ DOUBTED WHETHER THE PCE COULD DO BETTER THAN SEVEN PERCENT IN AN ELECTION. THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED PARENTHETICALLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT INTEND THAT THE PRESENT PENDING CASE AGAINST SANTIAGO CARRILLO FOR ILLICIT ASSOCIATION WOULD BE HEARD BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. THIS MIGHT TAKE SEVERAL YEARS.

8. SUAREZ THEN ASKED ME WHAT I THOUGHT ABOUT THE COMMUNIST PROBLEM AND THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF IT. I REPLIED THAT WHETHER OR NOT THE PCE WAS LEGALIZED OR AT LEAST ENABLED TO PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS WAS A MATTER FOR THE SPANISH TO DECIDE WITHOUT FOREIGN INTERFERENCE. SUAREZ SAID THAT THIS WAS A QUOTE DIPLOMATIC REPLY UNQUOTE AND HE DID NOT WANT THAT FROM ME. I ANSWERED THAT ALTHOUGH WE ARE ALWAYS CONCERNED ABOUT THE ROLE AND ACTIVITIES OF COMMUNIST PARTIES IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES, I COULD UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THE ARGUMENTS HERE IN SPAIN FOR LETTING THE COMMUNISTS PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTIONS SO THAT A TRUE MEASURE OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVITY CAN BE TAKEN. UNTIL THAT TIME, (AND ASSUMING A LOW PERCENTAGE IN THE ELECTIONS). THEY APPEAR A LARGER THREAT TO THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THAN THEY MAY ACTUALLY BE BECAUSE OF THEIR BETTER ORGANIZATION AND THE MYSTIQUE WHICH THEY HAVE SUCCESSFULLY CREATED AROUND THEM.

9. IN CONCLUSION SUAREZ SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT WHEN SPAIN WENT INTO THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS THIS SPRING THERE WOULD BE A BETTER RATIONALIZATION OF THE POLITICAL SCENE, WITH SEVERAL POLITICAL GROUPINGS ON THE RIGHT, SEVERAL IN THE CENTER AND SEVERAL ON THE LEFT. THE TWO THINGS

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THAT HE WAS ABSOLUTELY SURE OF WAS THAT THERE WAS A STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST SENTIMENT IN SPAIN AND THAT OVER THE YEARS AHEAD SPAIN'S GOVERNMENTS WILL BE MODERATE ONES OF CENTER-RIGHT OR CENTER-LEFT. STABLER

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